



Diocese
of
Cleveland

Cathedral Square

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

885/2018

16 November 2018

Pastoral Council and Parishioners
Church of Resurrection
32001 Cannon Road
Solon Ohio, 44139

Dear Church of the Resurrection pastoral council and parishioners,

May the peace of Christ be with you.

Thank you for taking the time to write, sharing with me in such a well-reasoned and detailed fashion, your thoughts on what Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, called a “moral catastrophe” that is taking place in the Church involving the clergy. From your letter I understand how seriously saddened you are about this failure of leadership in the Church. Your letter clearly reveals how deeply you love and care for the Church. As I said in my recent letter to the faithful of the diocese, I am deeply disturbed, saddened and angered by this horrible episode in the history of the Church and my heart goes out to those who have been so profoundly hurt.

I am very sorry for the pain and tremendous suffering that has been endured by so many at the hands of members of the clergy. In a particular way, I sincerely apologize to those who suffered clergy sexual abuse as children and had to walk through life living with this unimaginable burden. I also apologize to all the Catholics in our community who have had to endure this ongoing stream of unbelievable news about abuse: sexual abuse, abuse of authority, and abuse of trust. I have heard your voices, I have seen your letters and I understand your anger, outrage, sadness and your demand for reform in the Church. I share your feelings.

I believe the Church is in need of serious, meaningful reform and clear action. I also believe that the engagement of the laity is essential in whatever processes for purification we adopt. We must be willing to do what is necessary to create an environment within the Church in which abuse by those in authority is dealt with honestly, openly, and appropriately. I believe with the help of the Holy Spirit and people who care deeply for the Church, it will be done.

I want to assure everyone that I am deeply committed to combatting all forms of abuse in the Church and to work with my brother bishops, professional experts, the laity and other interested parties of good will here and across the country to root out any remaining vestiges of a culture within the Church that allowed clerics and even bishops to prey on the vulnerable and avoid just punishment for their wrongdoing.

With regard to your letter’s points concerning diocesan conformity with the *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse*, I wish to assure you that the diocese has devoted much time and effort in the areas of abuse reporting, screening, and education. In accord with this policy, all allegations of child sexual abuse are reported to both civil authorities and the diocese’s Review Board, and clerics are permanently removed from ministry if it is established by an admission, a conviction in a criminal court

or by way of an appropriate canonical that they have sexually abused a minor even once. Those who have been harmed by abuse are offered assistance and professional counselling to help with their healing. All church personnel – including all clergy and religious and all lay employees and volunteers – who in any way work with children must pass recurring criminal and sex offender background checks.

Over 154,000 clerics, religious and lay employees and volunteers have been specially trained to understand, spot and report any activity that suggests abuse. While these good, strong programs remain in place, all of us must be ever watchful in our efforts to prevent child abuse and remain deeply sensitive to the needs of those who continue to suffer as a result of such abuse.

One crucial element of the healing process is to publically acknowledge and identify those clergy who have sexually abused children within the diocese. The Diocese of Cleveland recognized the importance of this step early on in 2002, when it first began to publish the names of those clerics removed from ministry as a result of having sexually abused a minor. These postings can be found on our public website (dioceseofcleveland.org) by clicking the Child Protection tab and then clicking “News and Notices.” We continue to publish these names to this day. Furthermore, I have recently directed diocesan staff to conduct a review of the information currently posted there and to compile this information in a more user-friendly list format, which will be supplemented to include the names of those clerics, whether living or deceased, who we can determine sexually abused a minor and/or who were removed from ministry prior to April 2002 as a result of sexually abusing a minor.

In addition to what we are doing locally, I appreciate the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as it works to establish action plans related to the investigation, reporting and resolving of any allegations brought against bishops. This initiative will include substantial lay leadership and will be vested with the proper authority and independence. Know that I will be sharing points outlined in your letter with other members of the episcopate when we meet for our semi-annual meeting in November.

I am deeply committed to remaining ever vigilant in our efforts to protect children in the diocese and in taking any steps necessary to do so. I am very grateful to the faithful of the Church of the Resurrection and others like you who deeply love and care for the Church and who are vocal in expressing their concerns. Thank you for your service and dedication to your parish and the Church.

Please be assured of my prayers for you as I rely on your prayers for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, D.D.
Bishop of Cleveland